

Things to Consider Before Planting Your Seedlings



Photo by Elishia Ballentine

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For the 2005-2006 planting season, the Alabama Forestry Commission's E. A. Hauss Nursery has both bareroot hardwood and longleaf pine for sale. Seedlings start selling on June 1st. There are fourteen different varieties of hardwoods available, and the longleaf is a first generation seed source. Whether you are planting a few seedlings in the backyard or planting several acres, there are a few things to consider when planting your trees.

Bareroot vs. Containerized

There are several ways you can purchase seedlings. A bareroot seedling is grown in beds in fields, and when they are ready to be out-planted they are lifted or pulled up out of the ground and their roots are exposed (as in photo above). Another type is a container-grown seedling where the plant is grown in a container of some sort. In this situation, the seedling produces a root ball where the root system is contained in a ball of soil. This leaves the root system undisturbed when pulled out of the container. There are also seedlings that are grown in the ground and removed with a large spade or transplanter. The spade lifts a

ball of soil along with the root system out of the ground and then a type of material is wrapped around the root ball to maintain it during transport before planting.

When to Plant

If you are planting a bareroot seedling, you need to wait until seedlings are in their dormant state. Winter is the time of the year when most plants become dormant, when the growth of the seedling slows down and the bud of the seedling is hardened. The seedling can better handle the process of transplanting from the nursery to the forest since there is very little growth activity.

At Hauss Nursery, we receive a lot of calls in the spring for tree seedlings, mainly because people see plants and trees for sale at Wal-Mart, Lowe's, and Home Depot, etc. These are potted trees or container grown seedlings. Although you can plant these in the spring, they still need to be watered until the root system has a chance to establish itself. Even these potted trees will do better when planted in the fall and winter months because they are in the dormant state as mentioned earlier. When planting in the spring, not only will the root system be trying to grow but also the top will be growing as well, putting the tree in a

stressful state if it gets dry. By planting in the late fall or winter months, you give the seedling time to get the root system established without having to support height growth at the same time.

Choosing the Right Species

Remember to choose a tree or trees that will successfully grow in the area that you want plant it. Different species have different habitats in which they will thrive. Some things to consider are whether the site is a dry site or a wet site. Another has to do with your location, whether you live in North Alabama or South Alabama.

Seedling growth will depend on several factors. Rainfall, soil fertility, soil type, tree species, and whether the species is planted in an area that it will thrive. For example, slash pine can be planted in sandy dry sites, but that is not where they thrive. They prefer wet-natured sites such as flatwoods and swamps.

If you are in need of forest management advice, or for more information on how to plant tree seedlings or where you can obtain tree seedlings, contact your local Alabama Forestry Commission county office or the Commission's E. A. Hauss Nursery at 251-368-4854. ☎